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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of 300 parents of students in each of 18 North York Senior High Schools to determine their attitudes toward the schools which their offspring attended. Questionnaires containing 10 statements to be agreed or disagreed with were mailed to these parents,who were selected at random from listing of parents of students. The statements covered four broad topics: School and Education in General, Standards and Evaluation, Discipline and Attendance, and Students' Rights and Responsibilities. Parents were invited to make additional comments on the back of the questionnaire. Results are given in tabular and graphic form. (CK)

ED 084291

TM 003 299

NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH REPORT

SURVEY OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL AND EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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A Report Prepared for the Ad Hoc Committee Respecting Student Matters

by

E. Wright A.E. Virgin J.E.Griffiths

May, 1972

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
INTRODUCTION	1
PROCEDURE	
Sample Selection	2
Questionnaire Distribution	2
Data Analysis	2
Response	3
Organization of the Report	4
RESULTS	
Parents' Comments	6
School and Education in General	7
Standards and Evaluation	16
Discipline and Attendance	24
Students' Rights and Responsibilities	29
APPENDIX	31

INTRODUCTION

At the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee Respecting Student Matters, the North York Board of Education authorized that three surveys be conducted during the 1971-1972 school year, a survey of students, a survey of teachers and a survey of parents. This report contains the results of the survey of parents.

The above-mentioned committee selected the items to be included in the questionnaire for parents and agreed that 200 parents with children in eighteen Senior Secondary Schools would be asked to participate.

The surveys of students and teachers resulted in two earlier reports entitled, "Survey of Secondary School Students' Perceptions of School and Education", and "Survey of Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions of School and Education", respectively.

PROCEDURE

Sample Selection

Computer Services Department provided a print-out of names and addresses of 300 parents of students in each of eighteen North York Senior High Schools. These names were selected at random from complete listings of parents of students in grades 11 and 12. In the Department of Student Services, 200 names from each school were chosen from these lists (100 from grade 11 and 100 from grade 12) and duplications, in the event that a parent had children in both grades, were eliminated.

Questionnaire Distribution

Each questionnaire received a code number so that responses from parents in each school area could be grouped for analysis. No other identification was used or requested. A letter from Mr. J.E. Griffiths, the Superintendent of Student Services, explaining the purpose of the survey and urging parents to co-operate, and a self-addressed business reply envelope were attached to each questionnaire. Questionnaires plus attachments* were mailed out late in March.

Data Analysis

There were ten statements on the questionnaire and respondents were asked to check how much they agreed or disagreed with each. Any parent who wished to make additional comments was invited to do so on the back of the questionnaire.

All responses to the closed-ended items were transposed to mark sense cards. Computer Services tabulated the results and provided totals in numbers and percentages for North York as a whole, as well as a breakdown of the responses by school.

Comments made by parents on the backs of questionnaires were coded and analyzed in the Department of Educational Research Services.

The code numbers representing each of the eighteen participating schools were changed to letters which correspond to the letters used for schools in the reports on students' and teachers' perceptions. For example, the school designated as "O" in the student report, remained school "O" in the teacher report, and will be called school "O" in this report.

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* See Appendix for copy of questionnaire and attached letter.

Response

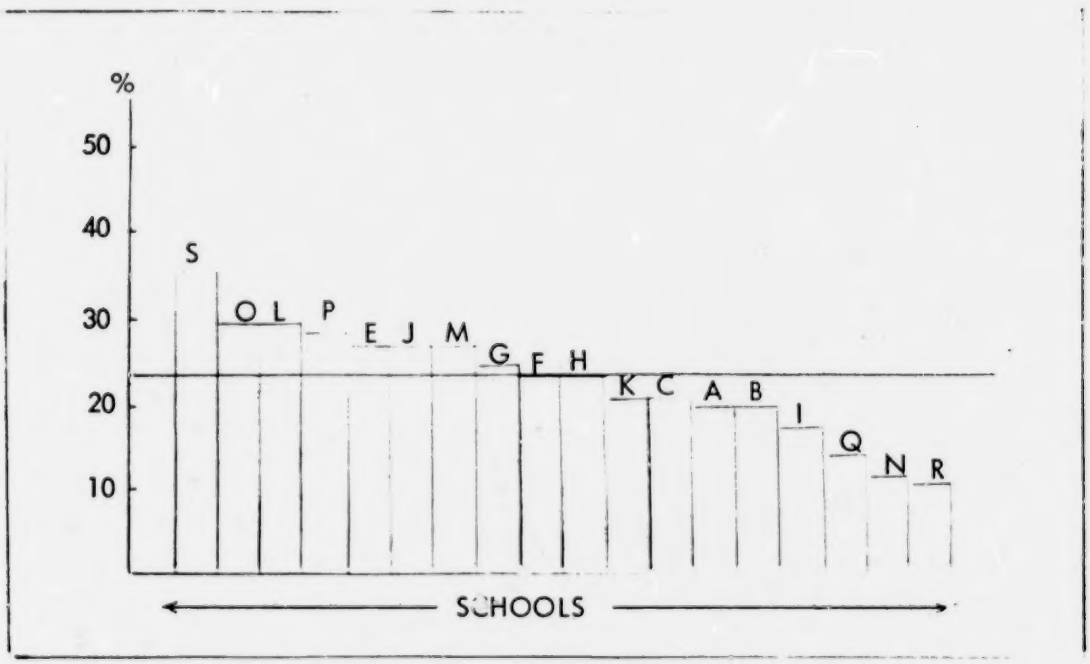
In all, 3,600 questionnaires were mailed to parents. Within two weeks, 1,527 (42%) were returned to Mr. Griffiths in the Student Services Department. The numbers and percentages of the questionnaires returned from each school area are shown in the following table.

School Letter	Response	
	#	% *
A	(72)	36
B	(84)	42
C	(82)	41
E	(70)	35
F	(105)	53
G	(80)	40
H	(96)	48
I	(81)	41
J	(94)	47
K	(79)	40
L	(106)	53
M	(90)	45
N	(61)	31
O	(93)	47
P	(105)	53
Q	(63)	32
R	(72)	36
S	(94)	47

* Percent of 200 which were mailed

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of the respondents wrote additional comments on the backs of their questionnaires. The percent of those who took advantage of this opportunity to share their views, by school area, is shown in the following graph. For example 94 parents in school "S" completed and returned questionnaires, and of these 94 parents, 34% made additional comments.

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO OFFERED
COMMENTS ON QUESTIONNAIRES
BY SCHOOL



Organization of the Report

The ten statements with which parents were asked to agree or disagree covered four broad topics:

Schools and Education in General
Standards & Evaluation
Discipline and Attendance
Students' Rights and Responsibilities

Responses to these statements are shown in percentages, that is, how many parents checked "Strongly Agree", how many "Agree" and so forth. Further, a breakdown of responses to each statement by school area is shown in a bar graph. Here the percentage of parents who Strongly Agreed, plus the percentage who Agreed, were added to get the total percentage who Agreed with the statement. Average agreement for all North York parents is shown by a black horizontal line across each graph.

A discussion of additional comments made by parents concludes the first three sections. Too few parents made comments about Students' Rights and Responsibilities for analysis to be meaningful. (See page 6 for a breakdown of all comments into categories).

RESULTS

PARENTS' COMMENTS

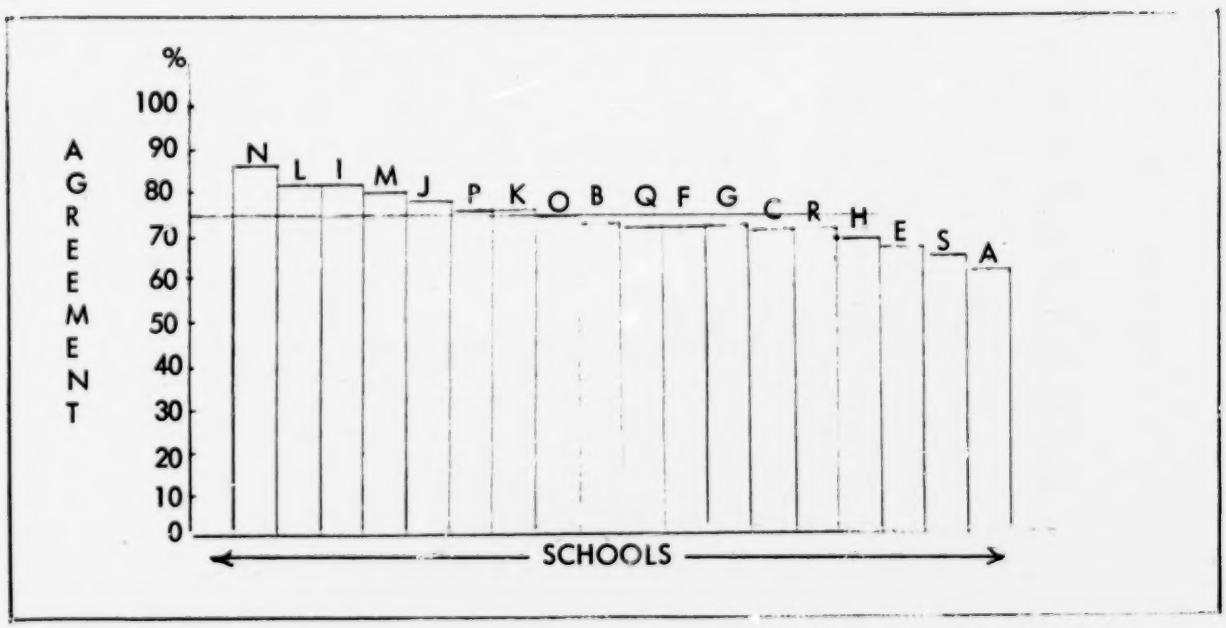
Response	* Responding #	%
Criticisms of teachers/ teaching	(90)	6
Re. need for (firm) discipline	(90)	6
Criticisms of educational spending	(75)	5
Re. low standards	(75)	5
Re. necessity for exams	(45)	3
Criticisms of Guidance Department/personnel	(30)	2
Re. marks	(15)	1
Other	(120)	8
Base (number of parents responding)	(1527)	---

* It should be emphasized that no more than 6% (90 people out of the 1527 responding) commented about any one of the above-listed categories.

SCHOOL AND EDUCATION IN GENERAL

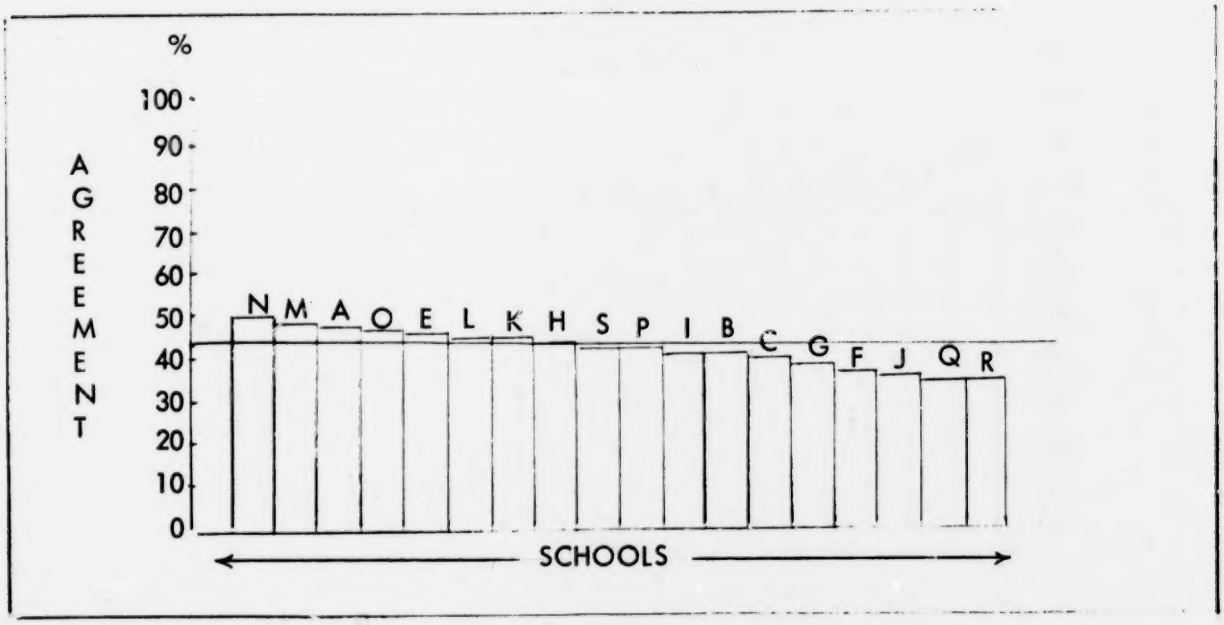
ALL IN ALL, OUR SCHOOL IS DOING A GOOD JOB OF EDUCATING MY CHILD(REN).

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	9
Agree	65
Disagree	18
Strongly Disagree	3
No Opinion/ No Answer	5
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



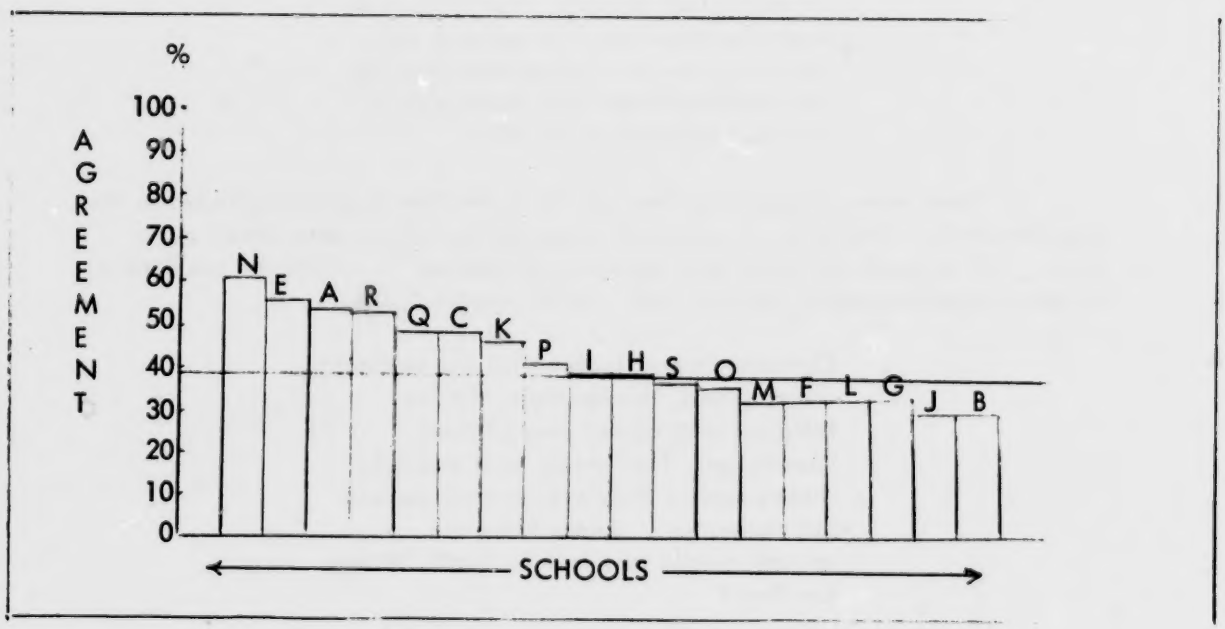
TAX DOLLARS INVESTED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION ARE WELL SPENT

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	6
Agree	36
Disagree	35
Strongly Disagree	10
No Opinion/No Answer	12
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



I FEEL THE COMMUNITY SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN RUNNING OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	31
Disagree	34
Strongly Disagree	18
No Opinion/ No Answer	8
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



GENERAL COMMENTS

Five percent (75 respondents) made comments on the back of the questionnaire about how their tax dollars are spent on education. A few examples are:

- I feel strongly that there are too many needless frills in our schools such as fancy furniture, rugs, etc.

- Education - yes, broadloom, no - trips to Europe at mid-winter break - no! Sending the school band to Sudbury - no!

- Too much spent on administration and recent cutbacks do not reflect this is being corrected.

- Too much spent on buildings, following the newest fads.

- I agree that tax dollars are well spent on education versus other social services. I strongly feel however, that this money would be better spent in training and improving teachers rather than in building extremely expensive monuments to various architects in the city.

There were no specific references to North York teachers included in the questionnaire. However, a number of respondents wrote in some detail about them. For example 6% criticized teachers, remarking, "... that the standard of teachers is getting poorer year by year - in all aspects," or,

- Our schools are riddled with the mediocre, the confused, the ignorant, the intelligent who cannot pass on their knowledge. The schools must weed out these people - they are not only useless but dangerous. Surely there are enough people who love to teach. Where are they?

- We feel teachers are not what they once were. In other words, they are concerned more with holidays, extra benefits, pay - rather than dedication. If the dedication were there, we are sure the benefits would be also.

- The main criticism of the secondary school system in general, seems to be the impersonal attitudes on the part of the teaching staff.

- Now that there is an abundance of job seeking teachers available, I believe that some of the poorer teachers should be replaced by the better qualified....Let the children rate their teachers. You will then know just how good each teacher is. Don't underestimate the pupils.

- If anything is wrong with the school system it is only the teachers - that is the only fault in our school.

* A few parents also mentioned the teachers' strike.

- I hold no brief for the teachers and consider their pleading of their cheap political -cum greed points on paid radio broadcasts on a Sunday - and Easter Sunday at that - the poorest possible taste! What an example for them to set our young people!!

- The students are treated as children - It annoys me when I hear of the teachers going on 24 hour strikes when strikes are ruining our economy. What kind of an example is this for our children?

Although only a minority of respondents, 30 out of 1,527 (2%) singled out the Guidance Department for special mention, their comments about this Department were almost unanimously critical.

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* It should be noted that this Survey took place during the period of the teachers' Study Session.

- Guidance teachers do not appear to be qualified to assist students in determining their future. This is a weak link in our secondary schools.

- Get rid of the Guidance Department. They do more damage than anything else - interfering with parental control. They make the children dissatisfied with their own parents. I have two graduates from a S.S. in North York and one in Grade 11. All honour students and they agree the guidance department tends to confuse them.

- Fire some of the guidance counsellors - the teachers federation will get over it.

Other comments made infrequently or which did not fit readily into categorization included criticism of

(1) the questionnaire:

- The worth of this survey is dubious as it is meant to encompass the educational structure generally. Modifications of structure occur from school to school therefore opinions as to discipline, freedom of curriculum choice and student administrative power may not be valid.

- Your questionnaire seems childishly loaded. .... what it appears you want, indeed expect, is that parents express their ignorance and unthought of prejudices. I for one won't answer loaded questions.

(2) open or 'self- learning' schools:

- We feel very strongly that the new so-called self learning schools, will turn out to be another waste of students' time, and tax payers money.

- Generally speaking North York's educational system is holding its own in regard to formal education. I do, however, feel that the experiment of open schools where students are permitted to lie around in the foyers and corridors should not be encouraged in our borough. As a business man making calls on schools throughout the province... it is disgusting to have to step over prone bodies (boys and girls) in order to make one's way to the main office.

(3) Administration:

- North York Secondary Schools are in dire need of "in depth" survey at the waste of valuable and costly time lost to them every school day.

- I would suggest that if the Board of Education were not so enthralled in its ivory tower on so many matters, and so big and unwieldy - not to mention impersonal - such a question - naire would not be needed. Come out of your conference rooms and formal sessions - get back "to the people" on a personal basis. Instead of suggesting the community be involved in the schools, why not re-evaluate your performance in the community? I suggest you are far too insular. I realize I have made a lot of critical comments and hence I should be prepared to sign my name. Under normal circumstances I would, but a previous sad experience when rather outspoken criticism of a teacher resulted in apparent rancour against one of my children, causes me to sign myself, simply - a very concerned parent.

(4) community involvement in running schools:

Here, although 52% disagreed with the idea of the community running schools, less than 1% (15 respondents) commented:

- The community elects Trustees to represent them in school matters... to permit community groups to have a say in the operation is to invite dissention within the community and ultimately "opposing" groups will vie to exert the greatest influence.

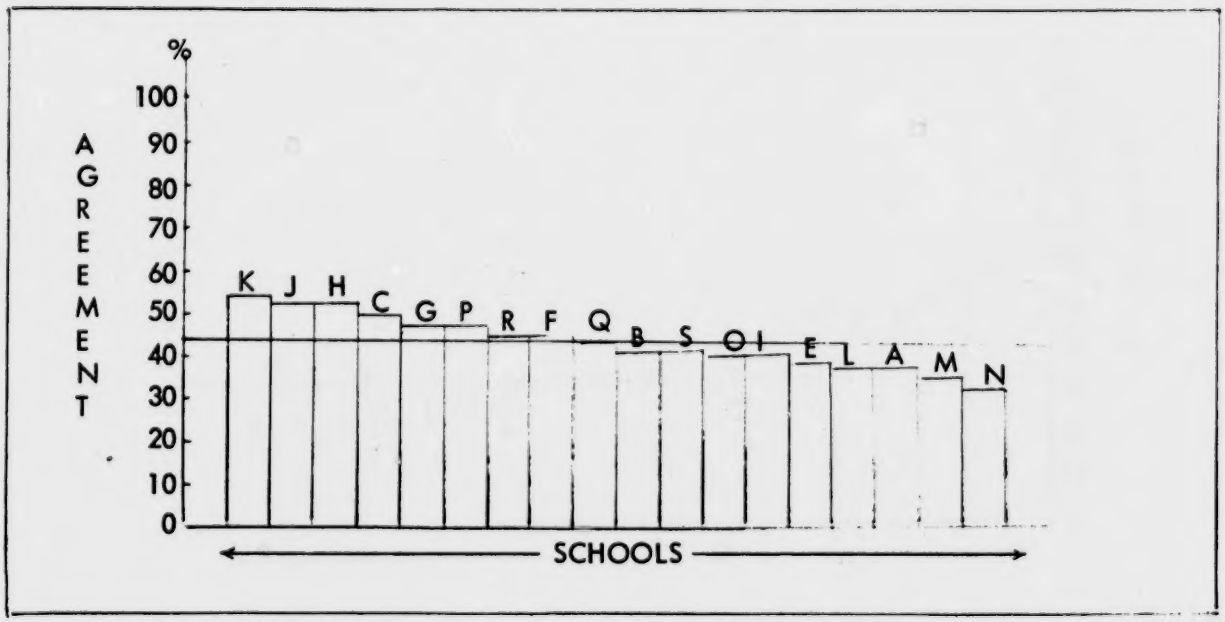
- I would like to see more use of school facilities for the public, e.g. pools, library, gyms.

- Levels and standards of education must be programmed by experts, not the "community".

STANDARDS AND EVALUATION

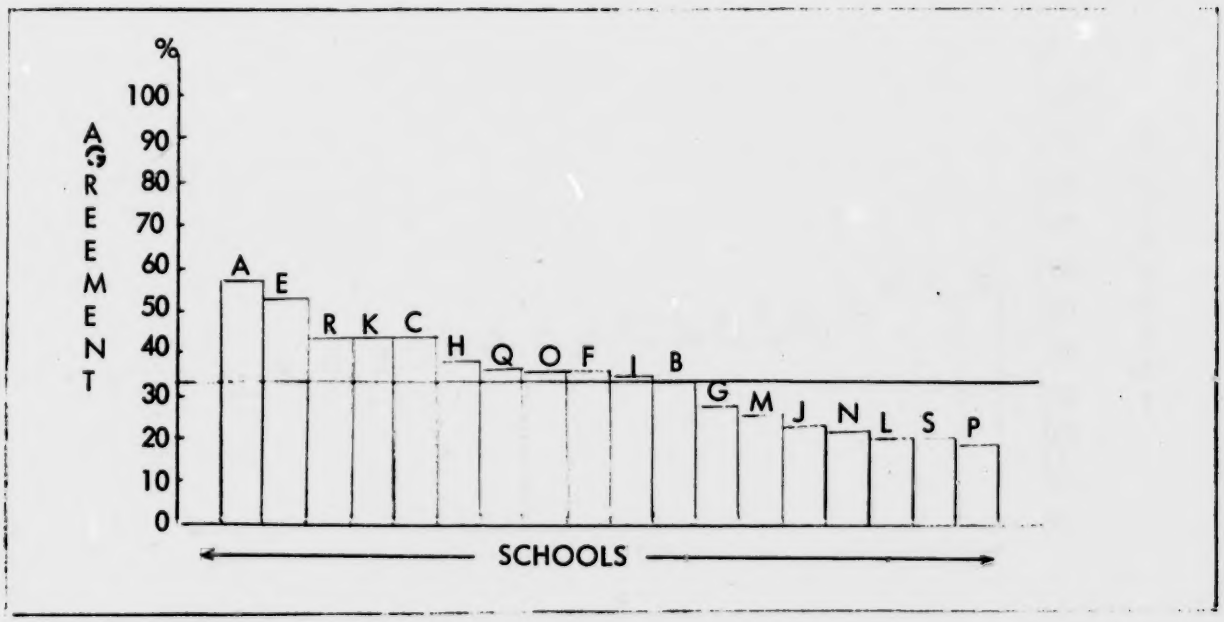
NORTH YORK SCHOOLS ARE DRIFTING AWAY FROM THE HIGH STANDARDS THEY ONCE HELD

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	13
Agree	31
Disagree	32
Strongly Disagree	4
No Opinion/No Answer	20
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



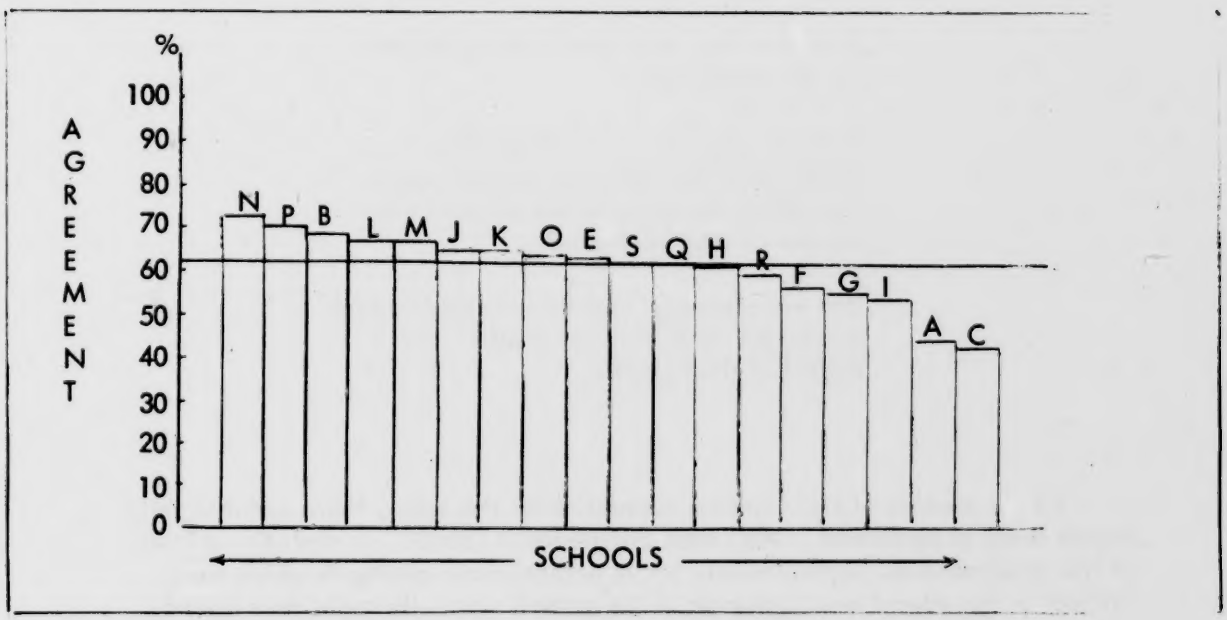
THERE IS TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON MARKS AND GRADES IN OUR SECONDARY SCHOOL

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	10
Agree	23
Disagree	50
Strongly Disagree	13
No Opinion/No Answer	5
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



FORMAL EXAMS ARE NECESSARY IN OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	18
Agree	43
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	10
No Opinion/No Answer	3
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



COMMENTS ABOUT STANDARDS AND EVALUATION

In response to the statement "North York schools are drifting away from the high standards they once held", 20% of the parents checked "no answer" or left the question blank. Several parents commented on this in the open section. Explanations included lack of knowledge of previous standards, and unwillingness to accept the statement that standards were high at one time.

- We lack a knowledge of the standards once held in the Secondary Schools so we're unable to express an opinion.

- Our lack of knowledge of previous North York educational standards leads to "no comment" answer.

- To answer this question I would first have to be convinced that North York schools did indeed have, at one time, a high standard. I am not prepared to accept the Board's claim in this matter.

- To answer you ever had "high" standards by what measure?

- By what measure can we judge this? North York has had and still has a good reputation though some experiments may trouble us more than others.

- You are assuming that the schools had high standards? How will you measure the impact of this question.

Of the parents who did commit themselves on this issue, there was a slightly higher level of agreement (44%) than disagreement (36%). In the open section of the questionnaire, approximately 5% of parents made comments which were critical of the educational standards of the schools which their children attend.

These comments include criticism of the lack of basic training in mathematics and spelling.

- I note a definite lack of "spelling" ability for all my children in the school system.

- More emphasis should be placed on reading, writing, arithmetic and basic items.

- The present school system may have progressed in a lot of ways but in others it has retrogressed. The pupils take fancy new maths. but it turns out graduates who do not know the basics.

- It seems to me that there is no more room for languages in the new concept of a secondary school.

- Spelling should be brought back in as a subject because some grade 13 students can't even spell four letter words and the students that apply for secretarial jobs now are terrible spellers.

Criticisms of experiment and innovation in the areas of teaching, curriculum planning and administration were made by a few parents:

- With the advent of the new credit system employed presently in Secondary Schools, a student can qualify for a graduation diploma without credits in Math. and Science. I believe this is not only a backward step, but a tragedy.

- Coincidental with receipt of your questionnaire my daughter announced that she has failed yet another mathematics exam. On this matter I am inclined to hold a strong view. I feel that she, and many other pupils in North York system has become a victim of a program that perhaps should never have been introduced. I resent the fact that my children were part of this experiment.

- Secondary schools must prepare students to fill jobs that are needed on the academic, labour, etc. market. As these needs are constantly and rapidly changing - so must the school be prepared to be flexible in its curriculum and teaching. Our schools have not met the challenge. I am not an educator - I don't know how, but I know it can be done.

- There is no question that the myth concerning North York and its high educational level is increasing. Part of this situation, we feel, is due to the fact that the hierarchy in North York has actually forgotten the feelings and attitudes of young people. This is a crucial variable when dealing with educational aspirations and expectations of youth. We are willing to fight for some real actual educational changes, so that our youth and theirs that follow will fall heir to what we thought they would receive - and did not - in the last several years. Will you assist us in this primary task?

- School is a time for learning and most students are putting in time ..... students are in trouble and the next ten years will multiply their problems because of the "standards" from the principal right down.

A majority of parents (61%) agreed that formal exams are a necessity in the school system, and 3% commented on their reasons for this attitude. These reasons included preparation for post-secondary education, and teaching the student to deal with stress.

- People are inclined to feel that exams place children under too much pressure. The business world, marriage, life itself is full of pressures and this is a step toward preparing children to adjust to periods of pressure and responsibility.

- I do really believe in exams to test the amount of knowledge gained, however from what I have been led to believe the time allotted to do these exams is far too short. More time is especially important for those students who are tense and though they understand their work require more time to set their thoughts on paper

- As long as universities and colleges insist on marks for entrance, they are necessary in secondary schools. However our children lose out on many of the pleasures of learning, when they continually have to strive for marks

- Marks and exams are important in the context of preparing for post secondary education - not of themselves.

Approximately the same percentage of parents (63%) disagreed with the statement that there is too much emphasis on marks and grades, and 1% gave reasons in the open section of the questionnaire.

- I feel marks are necessary to evaluate and encourage a student to do his or her best.

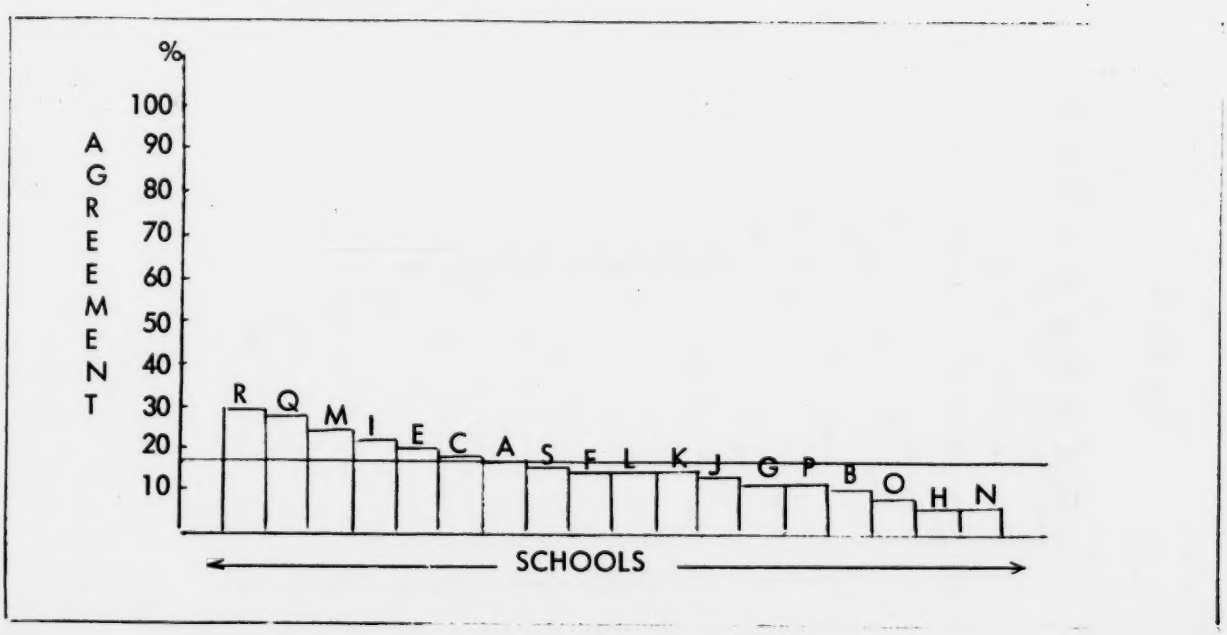
- Instruction without check to find out how much the student has learned is useless.

- There must be some standard for assessing students and so far marks and grades appear to be the most satisfactory, especially when based on continuous evaluation.

DISCIPLINE AND ATTENDANCE

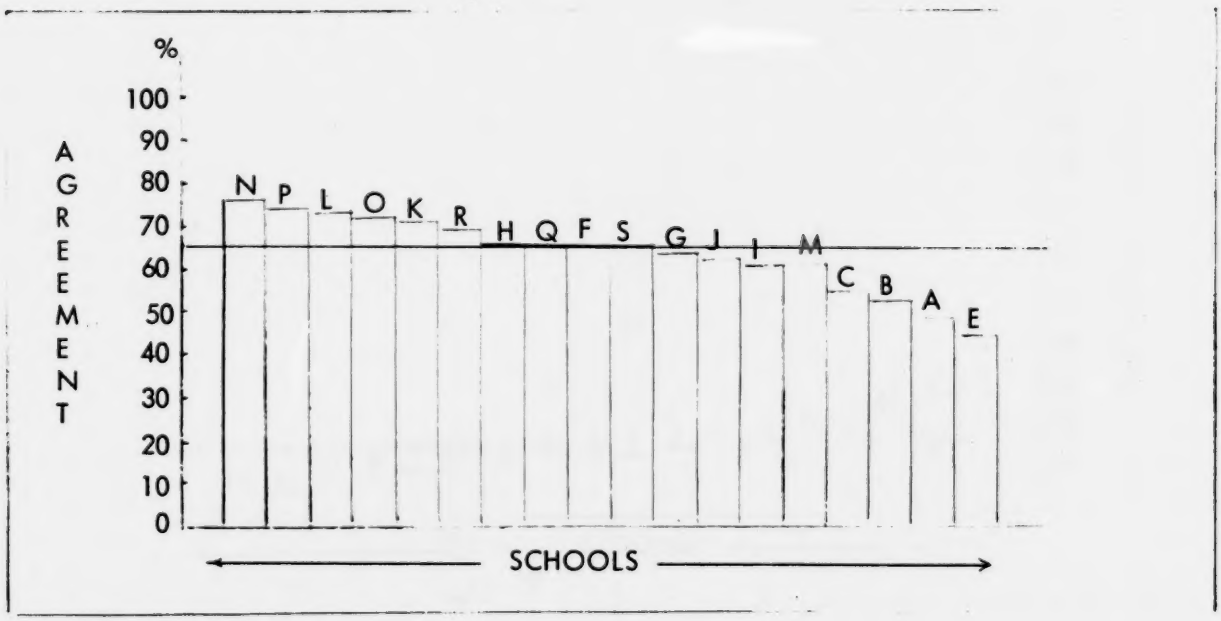
DAILY ATTENDANCE AT OUR SECONDARY SCHOOL
SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	7
Agree	9
Disagree	33
Strongly Disagree	50
No Opinion/No Answer	2
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



DISCIPLINE IN OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS SHOULD BE STRICTER

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	31
Agree	34
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	5
No Opinion/No Answer	5
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



COMMENTS ABOUT DISCIPLINE

A majority of parents agreed that discipline in the schools should be stricter. Six percent offered comments related to this concern. As the following remarks indicate, parents are generally not in favour of a return to 'Old-Fashioned' forms of discipline involving physical punishment. They would, rather, like to see their children handled with firmness and consistency, allowing them to grow into mature and responsible adults.

- I believe that discipline should be enforced in the school system. I have always disciplined my children at home, and I would hate to think that they were being disrespectful, etc. in school without being punished for it.

- Discipline should be stricter but not in the sense of physical punishment.

- Discipline should not be stricter but certainly methods of discipline should be reassessed and the pupil's welfare considered. They are not babies or criminals. They are young adults who need firm handling with understanding.

- Both the home and school need to set higher standards as to discipline. I believe we have allowed our school administration to re-act too far from the disciplines of 50 years ago and you who operate the schools are going to have a tough time bringing the "car back on the road".

- If students are not taught to accept responsibility and discipline they will never adjust to the outside world and jobs.

- .... more discipline. "Think not what the students think of you now, but what they will think of you 10 years from now when they will have found their place in life, or lost their way completely."

- My son remarked how strict his Math teacher was in class. I remarked that no doubt my son would be glad to get out of his class. His reply "No way, he's strict but fair and just a great teacher, we learn more in his class than in any other for the last couple of years."

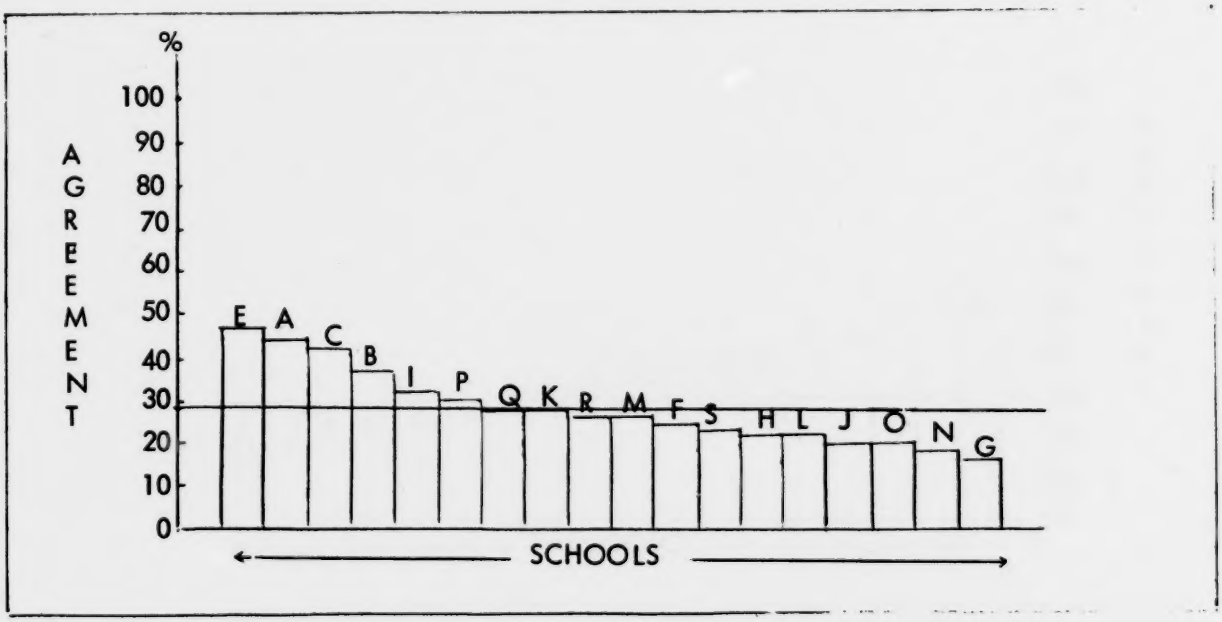
- More discipline in schools.

- Damage due to vandalism should be repaired at the expense of the families involved, not the tax payers in general.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

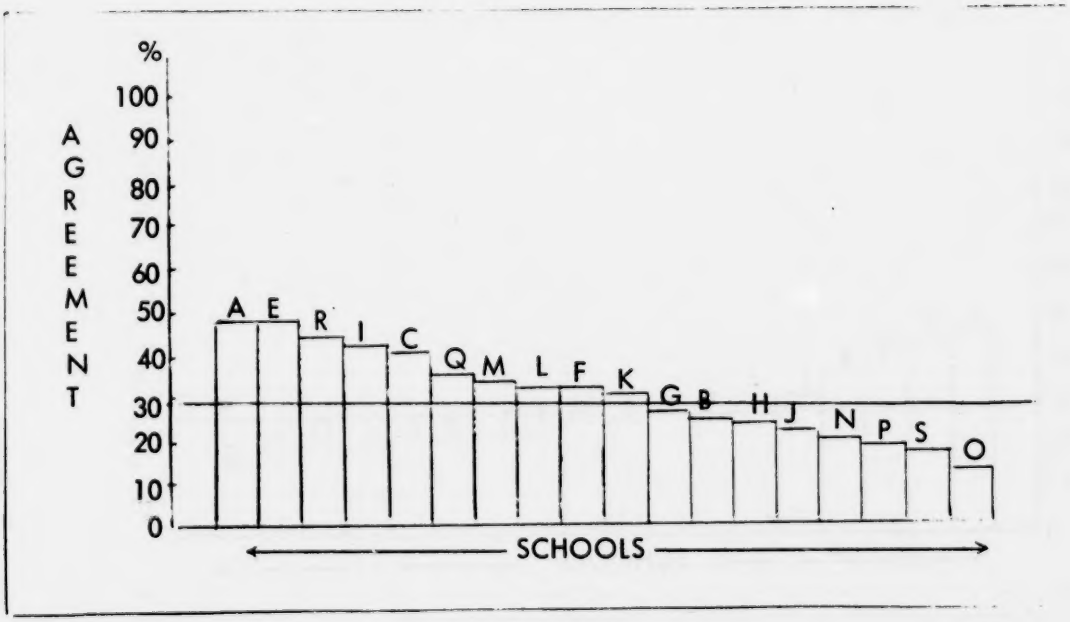
STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE MORE VOICE IN DETERMINING SCHOOL RULES AND REGULATIONS

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	6
Agree	22
Disagree	42
Strongly Disagree	28
No Opinion/No Answer	3
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



STUDENTS NEED MORE FREEDOM TO DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT TO STUDY

	Parents
	%
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	21
Disagree	47
Strongly Disagree	19
No Opinion/No Answer	4
Base (Number of Respondents)	(1527)



APPENDIX

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR
THE BOROUGH OF NORTH YORK

5050 YONGE STREET • WILLOWDALE
ONTARIO TELEPHONE 225-4661

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DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND SECRETARY-TREASURER

24 March 1972

Dear Parent(s):

The North York Board of Education has authorized that surveys be conducted to determine how students, teachers, and parents feel about North York's secondary Schools. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from you, a parent, about your attitudes and perceptions of various aspects of the secondary school which your son(s) and daughter(s) attends. This information will be valuable in understanding parents' views about some of the present issues in schools today.

Your co-operation in filling in this brief questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. Please return it, as soon as possible, directly to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed.

May I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to share your views with us.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

J Griffiths

JEG:bc
encl.

J.E. GRIFFITHS
Superintendent of Student Services

FIFTY YEARS NORTH YORK

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF NORTH YORK SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each one by checking the appropriate boxes.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. All in all, our school is doing a good job of educating my child(ren).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Discipline in our secondary schools should be stricter.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Tax dollars invested in secondary school education are well spent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. North York schools are drifting away from the high standards they once held.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Daily attendance at our secondary school should be voluntary.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Students need more freedom to decide what they want to study.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Formal exams are necessary in our secondary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I feel the community should be involved in running our secondary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Students should have more voice in determining school rules and regulations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. There is too much emphasis on marks and grades in our secondary school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION
IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS OR VIEWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH US, PLEASE WRITE THESE COMMENTS ON THE BACK OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

NOTE: PLEASE USE THE SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE TO MAIL THIS BACK TO US, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. REMEMBER, YOU DO NOT NEED A STAMP.